

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1-20 (Cancelled).

21. (Currently amended) A method for providing access to an online service, the method comprising:

receiving, at a first electronic appliance, a first digital certificate from a second electronic appliance associated with a user, the first digital certificate attesting to at least one attribute of the user;

determining, by the first electronic appliance, based at least in part on the first digital certificate, whether the user is authorized to access the online service;

issuing, by the first electronic appliance, based on the determination of whether the user is authorized to access the online service, a second digital certificate to the user, the second digital certificate attesting to the user's permission to access the online service;

sending, from the first electronic appliance to the second appliance, the second digital certificate; and

collecting, by the first electronic appliance, audit record information relating to the user's use of the online service.

22. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 21, further comprising:

receiving, at the second electronic appliance, a request from the user to access the online service;

checking, by the second electronic appliance, the second digital certificate to determine whether the user has permission to access the online service; and

allowing, by the second electronic appliance, the user to access the online service based on the determination of whether the user has permission to access the online service.

23. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 22, in which said checking step is performed in a protected processing environment at the second electronic appliance.
24. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 21, further comprising:
sending, from the first electronic appliance to the second electronic appliance, software for using the online service to the second electronic appliance; and
sending, from the first electronic appliance to the second electronic appliance, a digital signature for determining the integrity of the software to the user.
25. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 24, in which the digital signature is bound, at least in part, to the identity of the online service.
26. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 21, further comprising:
sending, from the first electronic appliance to the second electronic appliance, a third digital certificate, the third digital certificate attesting to the identity of the online service, the third digital certificate being issued by a certifying authority.
27. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 26, in which the first digital certificate is issued by the certifying authority.
28. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 21, in which the first digital certificate includes an indication of the user's age.
29. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 21, in which the first digital certificate identifies a party responsible for paying for the user's access to online services.

30. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 29, further comprising:
 sending, by the first electronic appliance, a request for payment to the party responsible for paying for the user's access to online services; and
 receiving, at the first electronic appliance, an indication that payment has been received.
31. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 30, in which the steps of (a) sending a request for payment and (b) receiving an indication that payment has been received are performed prior to performing the step of sending the second digital certificate to the user.
32. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 21, in which the second digital certificate attests to the user's permission to access the online service until a specified date.
33. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 21, in which the at least one attribute comprises an indication of the amount of purchases the user is allowed to make in a given time period.
34. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 21, in which the online service comprises an interactive online game.
35. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 34, further comprising:
 sending, from the first electronic appliance to the second electronic appliance software for playing the online game to the user in a secure container.
36. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 21, in which the online service comprises a subscription.

37. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 36, in which the second digital certificate includes an expiration date of the subscription.

38. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 21, further comprising:
collecting, by the first electronic appliance, payment information from the user.

39. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 38, further comprising:
sending, by the first electronic appliance, the payment information to a financial clearinghouse.

40. (Cancelled)

41. (Currently amended) A method as in claim 21, further comprising:
sending, by the first electronic appliance, the audit record information ~~relating to the~~
~~user's use of the online service~~ to a usage clearinghouse.

42. (Withdrawn) A method for accessing an online service, the method comprising:
sending a first request to access an online service from a user's site to an online service provider's website, the first request including a first digital certificate attesting to at least one attribute of the user;

receiving a request for payment information;

sending the payment information to the online service provider's website, or a website associated therewith; and

receiving a second digital certificate, the second digital certificate indicating that the user is authorized to access the online service;

accessing the online service.

43. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 42, further comprising:
 sending a second request to access the online service;
 checking the second digital certificate to determine whether the user has permission to access the online service; and
 allowing the user to access the online service if it is determined that the user has permission to access the online service.
44. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 43, in which said checking step is performed in a protected processing environment at the user's computer system.
45. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 42, further comprising:
 receiving software for using the online service;
 receiving a digital signature for determining the integrity of the software.
46. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 45, in which the digital signature is bound, at least in part, to the identity of the online service.
47. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 42, further comprising:
 receiving a third digital certificate, the third digital certificate attesting to the identity of the online service, the third digital certificate being issued by a certifying authority.
48. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 47, in which the first digital certificate is issued by the certifying authority.

49. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 42, in which the first digital certificate includes an indication of the user's age.
50. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 42, in which the first digital certificate identifies a party responsible for paying for the user's access to online services.
51. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 42, in which the second digital certificate attests to the user's permission to access the online service until a specified date.
52. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 42, in which the at least one attribute comprises an indication of the amount of purchases the user is allowed to make in a given time period.
53. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 42, in which the online service comprises an interactive online game.
54. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 53, further comprising:
receiving a secure container from the online service provider's website, the secure container containing software for playing the online game.
55. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 42, in which the online service comprises a subscription.
56. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 55, in which the second digital certificate includes an expiration date of the subscription.
57. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 42, further comprising:

sending information relating to the user's use of the online service to a remote site.

58. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 57, in which the remote site comprises a usage clearinghouse.

59. (Withdrawn) A method as in claim 57, in which the remote site comprises the online service provider's website.

60. (Canceled)

61. (Canceled)

62. (Withdrawn) A computer program product stored on a computer-readable medium, the computer program product including instructions that, when executed by a computer system, cause the computer system to perform acts comprising:

sending a first request to access an online service to an online service provider's website, the first request including a first digital certificate attesting to at least one attribute of a user;

receiving a request for payment information;

sending the payment information to the online service provider's website, or a website associated therewith;

receiving a second digital certificate, the second digital certificate indicating that the user is authorized to access the online service; and

accessing the online service.

63. (Withdrawn) A computer program product as in claim 62, the computer program product further including instructions that, when executed by a computer system, cause the computer system to perform acts comprising:

 sending a second request to access the online service;

 checking the second digital certificate to determine whether the user has permission to access the online service; and

 allowing the user to access the online service if it is determined that the user has permission to access the online service.